

Butler Dogtrot
On the Old Natchez Trace, 0.5 mi.
NW of Mackeys Creek, 5 mi. SW
of the intersection of State
Rte. 25 and 30
Tishomingo Vicinity
Tishomingo County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS 183

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MS-183

BUTLER DOGTROT

Location: On the Old Natchez Trace, 0.5 mile northwest of Mackeys Creek, 5.0 miles southwest of the intersection of State Routes 25 and 30, 4.4 miles southwest of Tishomingo, Tishomingo Vicinity, Tishomingo County, Mississippi.

USGS Paden SE 7 1/2' Quadrangle, UTM Coordinates:
16.380730.3830520.

Present Owner: United States of America (January 1979).

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The Butler Home Place was built in the late nineteenth century, using hand-hewn timbers, half dovetail corner notching, and pegged joinery. Until 1913 this two room log house with open central passage served as the home of James T. Butler (born 1855), who was Tishomingo County's oldest citizen at the time of his death in 1957.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Butler Dogtrot was probably constructed between 1866 and 1879. Since there was an older house northwest of this structure where a barn presently stands, it is unlikely that this structure dates before 1860 when William Butler acquired the property. Rubin Rex Butler remembers his grandfather, James Butler (1855-1957) telling that he helped William Butler (1811-1879) build the house. Since James Butler and his wife married and had their first child in 1877 (U.S. Census of Population, 1900), it is possible that the house may have been built as their first home. Both Ruby Butler Caldwell and Rex Butler believe the Butler Dogtrot was built sometime around 1870.
2. Architect: None.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Butler Dogtrot is located in the Southeast Quarter of Section 25, Township 5 South, Range 9 East, in Tishomingo County, Mississippi. References to the title of this land may be found in the Old Tishomingo County Deed Records located in the Office of Chancery Clerk, Alcorn County Courthouse Corinth, Mississippi and in the Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse, Iuka, Mississippi.

- 1860 Warranty Deed. J. W. Morton et al. to William Butler, February 15, 1860. Recorded in Old Tishomingo County Deed Book W, p. 324. Conveyance of the "South East Quarter Section Twenty Five in Township Five of Range Nine East of the Basis Meridian containing one hundred and sixty (160) acres more or less," for \$200.

On October 11, 1860 William Butler and his wife affixed their marks to a deed granting a portion of land in the northeast corner of this quarter section for "a School House and Meeting House." (Recorded January 18, 1861, Old Tishomingo County Deed Book X, p. 443) This appears to be the site of the Jackson Camp Church, located 0.2 mile to the northeast.

- 1889 Deed. G. G. Butler to James Butler, October 14, 1889. Recorded in Deed Book P-1, p. 488. G. B. Butler conveyed his interest in the estate of William Butler, deceased, to William Butler's son James. In addition to the 160 acres described above, the estate also included 60 acres in the northeast portion of the southwest quarter of Section 25, Township 5 South, Range 9 East. The land remained in the Butler family until 1978.

- 1978 Warranty Deed. Rubin Rex Butler and Ruby Butler Caldwell [grandchildren of James Butler] to the United States of America, June 21, 1978. Recorded in Deed Book B-92, pp. 681-686. 160 acres, for \$94,000.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: William Butler and his son James built the Butler Dogtrot. Considering the rich timber resources on the Butler land, it is likely that the logs came from trees on the property.
5. Original construction: The Butler Dogtrot retains much of its original appearance. Carrie Shackelford Wilemon, a granddaughter of the builder, recalls that the chimneys were made of mud and grass and were at the exterior gable ends of the building. Mud and grass chimneys were common in the region and were called "cat-tail" chimneys. (See Supplemental Material.) Rubin Rex Butler, a grandson of James Butler, remembers that the chimneys had bases of red brick. Butler also recalls hearing from his grandfather that the roof was originally covered with hand hewn oak boards.

6. Alterations and additions: The chimneys were removed from the exterior gable ends in 1926 when the second of two frame houses was constructed on the Butler property (Rubin Rex Butler Interview). At some point the west porch along the north room was enclosed for use as a kitchen. The door which connects the north room with this area may have been cut through at this time. The section of the porch on the east side of the building adjacent to the south room was screened for a sleeping porch. Later these enclosures were removed, though some of the horizontal siding of the kitchen addition remains in place, at the west end of the north elevation. The original oak boards were removed from the roof and it was covered with corrugated metal. The date of this alteration is not known.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

1. William Butler (1811-1879) and his wife Mary Parilee Butler (1830-1879) came to Tishomingo County from Itawamba County, Mississippi, in 1857, when their son James was two years old. (Iuka Vidette, January 5, 1956) Both Butler and his wife were born in Mississippi (U.S. Census of Population 1900). They were illiterate in 1860 when they affixed their marks to a deed donating land for a meeting house and school. (Old Tishomingo County Deed Book X, page 443).
2. James Butler (1855-1957) was married to Margaret Anne Davis (1859-1934). At the time the 1900 U.S. Census was taken they had been married twenty-three years and had five children ranging in age from 6 to 22. These children included Connie Butler Shackelfor, Mittie Butler McClung, Madge Butler Carroll, and Alvin and Sidney Butler. Butler also raised his younger brothers and sisters after his parents' deaths. (Interview with Carrie Shakelford Wilemon) James Butler was active until suffering a stroke one year before his death. He was at that time Tishomingo County's oldest citizen. (Memphis Commercial Appeal, January 8, 1956)
3. James Butler farmed the land, growing cotton and corn, and raising horses, mules, cows, chickens, turkeys, and geese. The livestock was pastured but the fowl were allowed to run. (Interview with Ruby Butler Caldwell) All ploughing was done with mules. (Interview with Carrie Shackelford Wilemon)

4. James and Margaret Butler lived in the Butler Home Place until 1913, when they moved to a newly constructed house a few hundred feet southeast of the older house. (See James T. Butler House, HABS No. MS-175). The log structure was then occupied by their son Sidney and his wife who stayed there during World War I. After the Sidney Butlers moved out, Alvin Butler and his wife lived in Butler Dogtrot during the 1920s when their daughter Ruby was born. (Interview with Carrie Shackelford Wilemon).

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records, Office of Chancery Clerk, Tishomingo County Courthouse Iuka, Mississippi. Office of Chancery Clerk, Alcorn County Courthouse Corinth, Mississippi, and Natchez Trace Archives, Natchez Trace Headquarters, Tupelo, Mississippi. There is no reference to the Butler Dogtrot in the Trace Archives despite the age of the structure and its location on the Old Natchez Trace. There are references to the Jackson Camp Church.

Interviews:

Rubin Rex Butler, 2602 Courtney, NW, Huntsville, Alabama. Telephone Conversations, August 15, 1978, and January 13, 1979. Rubin Rex Butler is the son of Alvin Butler and the brother of Ruby Butler Caldwell. He recalled what his grandfather told him about the construction of the log house.

Ruby Butler Caldwell, Iuka, Mississippi, August 25, 1978, and January 13, 1979. Ruby Caldwell is the daughter of Alvin Butler. She provided general information about the property.

Dalton Ward, Route 6, Booneville, Mississippi, August 24, 1978. Dalton Ward was born in 1906 and has lived in this area all of his life. He provided the information on how "cat-tail" chimneys were made. This information is included with Supplemental Material.

Carrie Shackelford Wilemon, Burton, Mississippi, August 9, 1978. Mrs. Wilemon is in her seventies and is the granddaughter of James Butler. She furnished information about the original state of the house and about the Butler family.

Cemeteries:

Jackson Camp Cemetery, Jackson Camp Church, Old Natchez Trace, Tishomingo County, Mississippi, about 5 miles southwest of Tishomingo. Most of the Butlers have been buried at this cemetery. All birth and death dates used in this history have come from tombstones.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Memphis Commercial Appeal, January 8, 1956. Collection of Carrie Shackelford Wilemon. Available on microfilm in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

U.S. Census of Population, 1900, Tishomingo County, Mississippi, p 211 B. Available on Microfilm in the Library of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

Iuka Vidette, January 5, 1956. Collection of Carrie Shackelford Wilemon.

Wilson, Eugene M. Alabama Folk Houses (Montgomery: Alabama Historical Commission, 1975).

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Survey
August 1978

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January 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Butler Dogtrot is an excellent example of a log dogtrot. It is well constructed and exhibits characteristics of log construction technology representative of the architectural traditions of the Upland South.
2. Condition of fabric: Although some of the parts are deteriorated, the building is structurally sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Two single square pens measuring about 18' on each side are separated by a breezeway 8' across. The overall length of the building, including the breezeway, is 44' square log pens measuring between 16' and 19' on all sides are characteristics of "second generation" dogtrot houses. (Wilson, p. 30).
2. Foundations: The dogtrot rests on pilings of logs and sandstone which vary in height to compensate for the uneven terrain.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are constructed of hewn pine logs. The spaces between the logs are covered in some places with wood planks nailed variously on the inside and outside of the walls, and in other places the gaps are uncovered. The front or east wall of the south pen has been whitewashed. The gable ends from the plate to the roof peak are sheathed with horizontal boards.
4. Structural system, framing: The building is of log construction with half dovetailing at the corners. Square hewn sills 9' across run the length of the long sides. Oak log floor joists, half notched, rest on the sills. The joists are hewn flat on top to receive the floor boards. The bottommost logs on the gable sides are half notched and rest on the sill. At the top of the walls two square-hewn log plates 6" across extend the length of the long sides and project beyond the gable ends by 4". Each plate consists of two logs notched and fitted together between the breezeway and the attached pen. The plates are pegged to the top wall logs.

The roof is formed by log rafters notched at the lower ends to fit the edge of the plate. The upper ends of the rafters are nailed to a ridge board. Purlins are laid over the rafters parallel to the plate to support the roof covering. Log joists for the floor of the loft extend from the uppermost wall log, across the interior of the pen parallel to the gable ends. Several floor boards from the loft remain in place in each pen. Both pegs and nails are used throughout to join members.

5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: Two shed-roofed porches extend the full length of the long sides of the building. The porch roof is supported by turned wooden columns which were originally part of the rear porch of a nearby house owned by the same family. The columns rest on log and stone pilings. One log post which may be original remains in place. The floors of the porches have been removed, but some of the floor joists running out from the sill of the house remain in place. Between the wall of the house and the edge of the porch roof on the southeast corner, horizontal boards have been nailed. The southeast porch was at one time, according to Rubin Rex Butler, screened in to form a sleeping porch. On the northwest corner of the building horizontal boards enclose the entire north side of the porch. This northwest porch was enclosed at one time and used as a kitchen.
6. Chimneys: Two large openings in the exterior gable ends mark the placement of the original chimneys, which have been removed.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are five doors, one into each pen from the east porch and one into each pen from the breezeway. The fifth door opens from the north pen on to the west (rear) porch and may have been cut through when that area was enclosed as a kitchen. The first four doors are constructed of six vertical 6"-planks joined on the interior by three chamfered rails. The fifth door is constructed of three vertical planks joined on the interior by two rails and two battens. All the doors open inward and have metal hinges.
 - b. Windows: A window is located in each of the exterior gable ends to the left of the opening left by the removal of the chimney. Each window has a sawn-board frame with no glazing.

8. Roof: The gable roof is covered with corrugated metal and extends over the rear and front porches. The ridge of the roof runs north-south.

C Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: the building is a dogtrot having two single pens separated by a passageway and a single common roof. One pen usually served the family as a living area and kitchen, the other as a bed room or room for guests. In warm weather the breezeway provided a cool work area for household chores and a pleasant place to eat. A loft provided a sleeping area for the children. The rooms of this particular dogtrot may have been used in this manner, or as one family member recalls both pens may have served as bedrooms.
2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: The floors are of wood planks. In the south pen and the breezeway the boards are approximately 6" wide. In the north room they are 3-1/2" wide.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: The interior walls are unfinished, except for planks nailed over some of the spaces between logs. Remnants can be seen of newspapers and wallpaper which were at one time pasted over the logs. The ceiling is unfinished.
5. Doorways and doors: The doorways are framed with sawn boards.
6. Decorative features and trim: Boards forming simple mantels are still in place in the end walls of both rooms.
7. Mechanical equipment: There is no electricity and no plumbing in the house.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The long axis of the building runs north-south. The front faces east. the Old Natchez Trace runs south of the building. To the north the flat ground on which the dogtrot is located slopes steeply upward. A spring is located opposite the front of the building to the east. Much of the surrounding area is heavily wooded with shortleaf and loblolly pine, red and white oak yellow poplar, sweetgum, hickory, walnut and wild pecan trees. About 16 acres of the 160-acre site have been cleared for cropland, about 15 acres for pasture.

2. Outbuildings: A frame house dating to 1913 is located to the southeast and two transverse crib barns are located to the southwest. (See James T. Butler House, HABS No. MS-175.) Far up the hill from north of the dogtrot are two additional structures, a frame one story house and a log and plank barn. (See descriptions of outbuildings in data for James T. Butler House HABS No. MS-175).

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Survey
January 1979

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation done during the 1978 Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Interagency Archeological Services, Atlanta, and cosponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile and Nashville Districts, in compliance with Executive Order 11593, as a mitigative effort in the construction of the waterway. Records were made of eighteen historic sites and structures in the region between Gainesville, Alabama, and Iuka, Mississippi.

The project was executed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor was James Murray Howard of the University of Illinois. Project Historian was Betty K. Bird of the University of Virginia. The Assistant Historian was Michael Ann Williams (University of Pennsylvania). Foreman was Ruthie D. Wiley of the University of Florida. Student Architects who prepared measured drawings for the project were Carol J. Crandall (Carnegie-Mellon University), Richard J. Cronenberger (University of Miami), Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Daniel M. Gaines (University of Tennessee), and R. Bradley Mellor (Rice University). The inventory of sites within the project area was carried out by Inventory Supervisor J. A. Chewning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Assistant Historian for the inventory was Pamela J. Wolf (George Washington University). One structure was recorded during the winter of 1979 by project supervisor Peter G. Darlow (McGill University), Sally K. Tompkins, Project Historian, and Staff Architects Bethanie C. Grashof, Rudy Massengill, and Janet Hochuli (The Cooper Union). Drawings for this structure were completed during the spring of 1979 by staff Architects Peter G. Darlow, Janet Hochuli, James F. Speake and Reginald A. Berry (Howard University). Photographs were taken by David J. Kaminsky in the summer of 1978 and by Gil Ford in the spring of 1979.